

# Tourism Management System in Mongolia: the Case of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park

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## Abstract

International tourism in Mongolia is in modern term still in its infancy. The first international visitors arrived in 1994, when visas were finally available to international tourists. For all its socialist period, from 1924 until 1992, Mongolia was closed to the outside world. Today Mongolia is, measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), one of the poorest nations on earth. The primary foreign exchange earner of Mongolia is the export of minerals. Tourism is increasingly important to the national economy, providing not only hard currency earnings but also desperately needed employment. Stated government policy is the future development of tourism, especially the increase in foreign visitors and the contribution tourism makes to the national economy. Tourism sector in Mongolia is strongly characterized by lack of skilled staff at different levels, affected also by high seasonality of Mongolian tourism sector. Lack of knowledge and skills is a problem that goes throughout the whole tourism sector, from the management level, to the operational staff. Training opportunities in Mongolian tourism sector are limited also by lack of professional training institutions with training programs prepared on the basis of existing training needs. The staff cannot satisfy tourists needs if there is no or bad understanding between them. Goods and services will be improved with skilled labors. This research purpose is to investigate and determine the effectiveness of tourism management system of Mongolia via the review of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. Tourism management system of Mongolia is examined with three key variables which are: information, resource management, inter-organizational collaboration. In-depth interviews with 4 policy stakeholders with different backgrounds serve as the research method. To fulfill the objectives of this article, the researcher selected people who are tour company director and employees of Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

**Keywords:** information, resource mobilization, tourism management system, inter-organizational cooperation

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited ". Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries as well as the major source of foreign exchange earnings and employment for many developing countries. Devised by WTO was endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 1993 following an International Government Conference held in Ottawa, Canada in 1991.

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. In 2011, there were over 983 million international tourist arrivals worldwide, representing a growth of 4.60% when compared to 940 million in 2010. International tourism receipts (the travel item of the balance of payments) grew to US\$1.03 trillion (€740 billion) in 2011, corresponding to an increase in

real terms of 3.80% from 2010. In 2011, international travel demand continued to recover from the losses resulting from the late-2000s recession, where tourism suffered a strong slowdown from the second half of 2008 through the end of 2009. The negative trend intensified during 2009, exacerbated in some countries due to the outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus, resulting in a worldwide decline of 4.20% in 2009 to 880 million international tourist arrivals, and a 5.70% decline in international tourism receipts. During the 1970s, tour operators began to compete by drastically cutting prices in order to attract more customers. During the 1990s, the short getaway holiday has become more and more popular, often remaining within one's country of residence because of highly demanding jobs and less free time. An increase in specific demands by customers has led to an increase in the number of specialized operators.

Tourism started in Mongolia nearly 40 years ago. During this period, foreign tourists were allowed to visit a certain number of places. Mongolia has been an important traveler's destination for many centuries, beginning with the famous Silk Road. However, it is only recently that political changes in Mongolia have allowed full participation in the international tourism and travel sector. According to unofficial data, Mongolia earned \$US 5 to 7 million as average annual income from tourism. This was nearly 2.00% of export income. Mongolia has regularly scheduled flights to Moscow, Beijing, Almaty, Irkutsk, Ulaanbaatar, Khukhot, Seoul, Osaka and Berlin. At present, Mongolia has three Boeing 723 aircraft in service. Russian Aeroflot, China Air and Korean Air arrive in Ulaanbaatar one to three times a week. Mongolia has air transportation agreements with Russia, China, Japan, Kazakhstan, Viet Nam, Thailand and Hungary. Recently, a new air company was set up in Mongolia. This is Eastern Airline of Mongolia and Russia, and it flies basically to local areas. Mongolian airline, MIAT, makes chartered flights to tourist areas from Ulaanbaatar to South Gobi, Khuvsgul, Khujirt, Khar-Khorum and Khalkyngol.

Apart from air transportation, there is a railway which carries most Mongolian business travelers between Russia and China. European travelers used to travel the Trans-Siberian Railway to Mongolia, and the number of such passengers is increasing. This is another possibility to be developed. Asian tourists, particularly those interested in the Gobi scenery could possibly travel by train from Beijing through Sainshand and Choir. There is a possibility to travel by train from Ulaanbaatar to Darkhan, Erdenet and Amarbayasgalan, but this route has not been used because there were no comfortable passenger trains and service was unsatisfactory. There are not enough hotels in this area, and therefore, the service quality is low. There is great interest to develop this region, however.

In Mongolia, prior to 1990 leisure tourists arrived from Capitalist countries (as defined at that time) such as West Germany, UK, USA and Japan was approximately 1,000. At that time only one tour operator called — Juulchin — was handling all tourists coming to Mongolia. After 1990, Mongolia's transition to the market economy the numbers of private tour companies have mushroomed estimated in December 2003 for 470 tour operators, over 280 motels and hotels, 140 tourist camps running tourism services throughout the country. According to 2002, 198,057 tourists arrived to Mongolia out of total 230,188 visitors. And income from tourism is estimated USD 112.9 million, which accounts as 10.50% of GDP. Tourism sector provided employment for nearly to 11,000 and it is likely to increase.

According to information from Mongolian Tourism Association (MTA), in 1995, 110,000 foreign visitors arrived in Mongolia, from over 50 countries, of which about 15,000 (13.61%) were organized as group tourists. Over 40.00% of visitors came from China, about 25.00% from Russia, 8.00% came from Japan, 2.00% from the Republic of Korea and 10.00% of visitors came from Western Europe. Around 90.00% of visitors from the neighboring Russia and China were businessmen (MTA, 1995). Tourism, especially adventure and ecotourism, has been recognized as a vital part of Mongolian economy since political and economic changes took place in 1990. In Mongolia, since we are only tourist receiver, not tourist supplier for the international market, our tour operators also play leading role in terms of actual tourists flowing into the country and income generation.

### ***1.1. Motivation***

Based on having unique tourism resources such as wide open steppes, nomadic way of life, land of Ghingis Khan and its potential for our economy, Mongolian government is highly encouraging tourism development in order to attract investment, income from foreign expenditure and employment opportunities. In this development process of Mongolian tourism industry, tour operators play important role particularly for the inflow of leisure tourists, tourism product service quality and destination image. Following Mongolia's transformation to improve its market economy in 1990, the tourism sector has evolved into a critical part of the country's development.

On the other hand, Mongolia suffers from many obstacles to tourism development, many of them stem from Mongolia's isolated location, climate, and the poor state of travel infrastructure conditions. For an average tourist this means a destination that is expensive to reach and hard to get around upon arrival. For tourism companies, the short season makes it hard to save enough income to reinvest in growth. Private companies and the government in this industry have different ideas about the difficulties of the industry. From the private sections view, government policies are weak as it does not encourage redistribution of economic and social benefits and of tourism to the local levels, while management of protected areas and natural resources encourage centralization, rather than local management and preservation processes. Another challenge is the current structure of supply chains in the industry, which lacks strong local economic linkages, including service linkages (guiding services, horse rental, etc.), and cross-sectored linkages (food services and local suppliers). But, on the other hand, from the government view, great number of tour operators, with unprofessional management skills (even some does not have basic knowledge about Tourism industry), established only for economical reason they tend to break their promise and provide poor service for our potential tourists. This tendency likes to decrease overall Mongolian tourism product quality and destination image at the international tourism market. Many of the country's key natural and cultural heritage sites are under threat from economic interests, unmanaged development or acts of destruction, and lack of proper management. Therefore, there is a great need to analyze Mongolian tourism industry, to compare opinions of group of respondents, to suggest policy implication based on the results of the survey and to make a suggestion. The concluding

statement will be presented together with some recommendations for best possible way to develop tourism industry in Mongolia in terms of research framework factors.

### ***1.2. Research purpose***

This study is to explore an effectiveness of tourism management system in Mongolia through qualitative research analysis, especially in terms of response mechanism. There are some detailed objectives listed as following:

- To analyze the current situation of tourism industry of Mongolia.
- To compare opinions of three group of respondents, i.e., employee of a private company, employee of governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- To suggest policy implications based on the results of the interviews.
- To make some suggestions for promoting development of tourism industry of Mongolia.

### ***1.3. Definition of terms***

- Tourism is a travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. Tourism is the trips performed to rest, enjoy, sightsee and get to know or all these economic and cultural works for attracting tourists to a region. Owing to tourism, people can take a different approach to life by realizing both the beauties of other countries and outside of the region where they live in their countries and cultural heritage left by the people living in the past, and by believing in the necessity of handing down a more livable world to the future generations. Tourism is a fast-growing sector in parallel with increasing prosperity in the world. People have started to direct the added values produced by them in business life to recreational activities. As a recreational activity, tourism has come to a significant point [7.]. According to a research by Mill and Morrison tourism is series of activities which is happen during the tourist`s trip and includes any activities such as travel planning, travel to a destination, residing, returning and recalling its memories. As well as it can be consisted of all tourist`s actions which is done as a part of its travel like purchasing different products and interactions between host and guest, generally, all actions and interactions which is happen during a trip can be considered as tourism. [1]

- Gorkhi-Terelj National Park: It is one of the national parks of [Mongolia](#). The Terelj tourist zone has a number of "tourist camps". It is connected with [Ulaanbaatar](#) by a paved road (main road to the East #A0501 [Baganuur-Öndörkhaan](#) direction, 37 km from [Ulaanbaatar](#) city center, left turn to the branch #A24, 5 km later road crosses [Tuul River](#) and the National park territory begins). The road comes to the Gorkhiin Davaa pass. Most of the tourist camps and tourist attractions are before this pass. The road then ends at the settlement of [Terelj](#), which features small shops and restaurants. The Terelj settlement is located in the valley of the [Terelj River](#) (*Terelj Gol*), approximately 66 km from the [Ulaanbaatar](#) city center. The national park tourist zone is formally in [Nalaikh duureg](#) (district) part of Ulaanbaatar municipality, the rest of the protected zone beginning to the north of the Terelj River, is located in Mongolia's [Tuv Province](#). An average altitude of the 293.168 ha national park is 1600 m above sea level and the highest point is 2664 m Avkhan mountain. The national park is one of the most visited national parks due to its close location. There are numerous ger camps and resorts in the tourist zone before the Terelj

River. The rest of the protection zones start after the Terelj River and become less touristy, less inhabited with pristine nature. The depths of the mountain forest are rich in wild animals, including boar, red deer, roe deer, fox, wolves, etc while birds of prey fly everywhere.

**1.4. Research framework**

There are a number of studies proposing important factors that leads to both successes and failure of tourism management system. The author developed the following framework to investigate the effectiveness of tourism management system in Mongolia (Figure 1). A concept of this framework has been inspired by Yang’s three-element model including information gathering, local government mobilization and inter-organizational cooperation which he employed to examine the disaster rescue system function of the government of Nantou county during the earthquake of 21 September 1999.[2] A conceptual framework, on which the following literature review is based, was developed to analyze the tourism management system via an evaluation of the implementation of the local government tourism management system for the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park [2]. The independent variables are information, resource mobilization, and inter-organizational collaboration, and the dependent variable is the effectiveness of tourism management system. (see Figure 1).

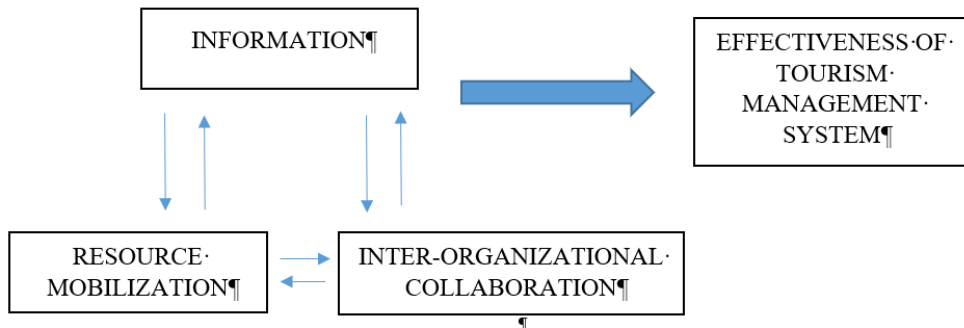


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the tourism management system.  
Source: (Yang, 2010).

**1.5. Background of the case study**

Gorkhi-Terelj National Park was founded as a national park in 1994 and is located on the edge of Khan Khentii mountain range. Terelj is the name of a plant (Latin ledum) which is very abundant in the area and which flowers at the end of the spring. Edelweiss is also very common here.

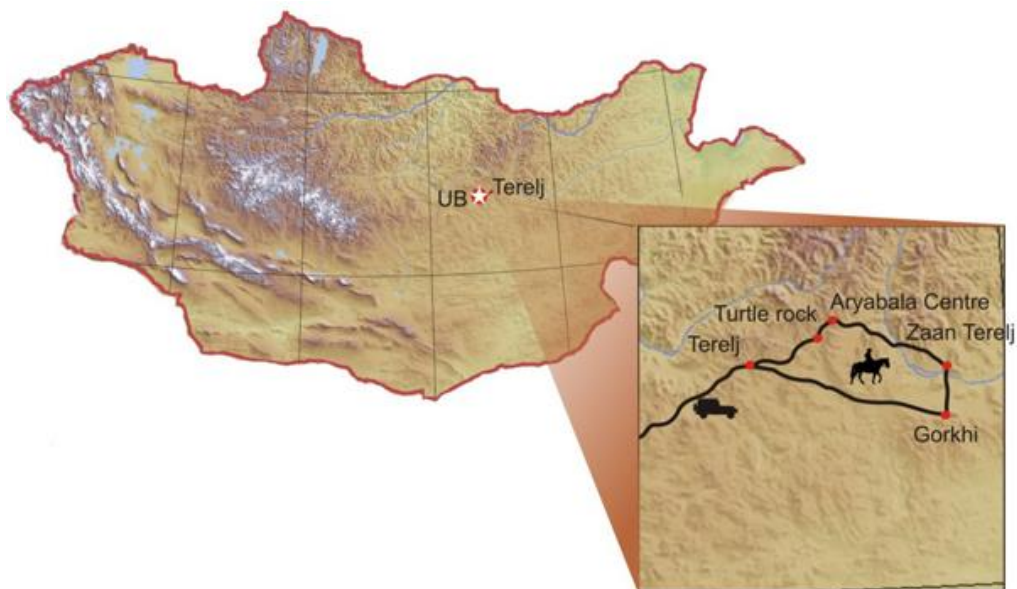


Figure 2. Location of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park

The alpine scenery and fantastic rock formations of Terelj National Park were the homelands of Genghis Khan and his hordes. The rock formations of the park are fascinating, while more than 250 bird species make it an enchanting place to relax. Some of the rock formations resemble the bodies of prehistoric animals. Nomadic tribesmen still herd their herds in the pastureland. It is considered one of the most beautiful worth visiting places for travelers who wanted to rest in surroundings near Ulaanbaatar city /the capital city of Mongolia/. If you like adventure activities such as hiking, rafting, horse or camel riding and visiting nomad family and stay overnight in traditional Ger dwelling within short period, this is the real place to fulfill your wishes. Located 55km northeast of Ulaanbaatar city, this popular national park is characterized by picturesque alpine scenery. It offers great opportunities for hiking, rock climbing, swimming (in icy-cold water), rafting and horse riding. For hard-core extreme-sports fanatics, there's skiing and dog sledding in the depths of winter.

## 2. Literature review

The success of a tourism destination in its approach to destination management can be influenced by a wide range of factors. As a dynamic and complex industry, destination managers need to be continually monitoring, reviewing and evaluating tourism performance and management strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism in the destination. The strategic planning and ongoing management for a destination will contribute to the continuous improvement and success of a tourism destination.



## 2.1. *Information*

**Information** is an important element of any system or industry to exist and prosper. Tourism industry as a matter of fact requires large amount of information on different areas. The role of information in tourism is an important for everyone. Information in modern society changes the space–time dimensions of tourism receivers. The capacity of residents, tourists, and tourism promoters, to communicate in time and space, are dilated with the use of information and communication techniques that transcend the need to transfer the information personally. Inclusively, information can be absorbed by tourists in streets, squares and by utilizing mobile phones, laptops, and televisions [3]. The important information covers image of destinations, products, competitor’s offering, prices, quality and services, promotional and selling activities, channel and experience of tour operators. Information has an important place in the lives of people. Information can be described as all of the concepts, facts, and principles that human genius can reach [4]. Regarding travel behavior and motivation, the information one related to motivation for travel, location accommodation, and mode of transport, frequency of visits, services at hotels, actual relations to prices, destination and products.

With instant information, reliable travel networks, and great tools to overcome language and cultural barriers, the travel of today is far improved over the travels of the past. And aside from the distant aspects of global tourism, even local tourism is much improved by the benefits of technology. Away from just information, the key benefit technology has had on the world of tourism is in how it can deliver the places to the potential tourist before they even think of leaving. This feat has been accomplished through the technology of photography, video recording, and audio recording. It doesn't matter if it is just pictures in a brochure, sounds of the culture on a CD or tape, or a television program on the Travel Channel, people are completely aware of what they are thinking of going towards, and the only thing they have left to do is experience it all in person. The system is a combination of methods useful for getting results and a whole consisting of physical and conceptual elements dependent on one another, and sub-systems. The existence of a certain system is necessary to collect and process information. The last developments in information and communication systems affect the works related to the preparation of touristic products within data gathering, processing and analyzing for touristic products and destinations. Moreover, it provides new opportunities for marketing, management and promotion area for establishments in the tourism sector and touristic destinations [5][6].

Although many tourists have access to the Internet, a new demand arises when they arrive in the destination, for instance, information that is known only “to residents” regarding safer places, faster paths and more interesting trips, among other information that is only available from a tourist information centre [7].

## **2.2. Resource mobilization**

Resource mobilization is the process of getting resources from the resource provider, using different mechanisms, to implement an organization's predetermined goals. It is a theory that is used in the study of social movements and argues that the success of social movements depends on resources (time, money, skills, etc.) and the ability to use them. It deals in acquiring the needed resources in a timely, cost-effective manner. Resource mobilization advocates having the right type of resource at the right time at the right price by making the right use of acquired resources thus ensuring optimum usage of the same. Elahe and Fateme made a research on investigating factors affecting the development of tourism industry in Iran.[8] This research aims to study the importance of public participation in tourism development in Iran. It is initially dealt with the phenomenon of tourism and its importance, then such factors influencing the development of tourism industry as security, citizen participation, media and information technology are stated and a conceptual model for the research is offered. It is concluded that public involvement results in better decisions and community decisions that involve citizens are more likely to be acceptable to the local people. Also, the role of government in providing security and the role of media and information technology was proved to be significant in development of tourism industry in the country.

Peter mentioned that if tourism in Mongolia is to increase its contribution to the national economy and continue developing, this thesis recommends that the collection of detailed visitor data should become a main objective for all stakeholders. The collection of detailed tourism data is an essential starting point to better overcome the other three pressing challenges facing tourism in Mongolia today. The result of the research is that recommends to make the extension of the short summer tourist season a strategic objective, to implement crime reduction measures such as the establishment of a tourism police unit and to overhaul the domestic air transport sector.[9]

Concluding based on the prior literature review with several authors about tourism industry of Mongolia, as today tourists seek remote, unspoiled places and in this context tourism can bring social and economic development to locations where no other economic activities take place. The researchers knew that developing tourism sector in Mongolia could be one of the key to economic development of the country. On the other hand, the researchers recommend that make the extension of the short summer tourist season a strategic objective, to implement crime reduction measures such as the establishment of a tourism police unit and to overhaul the domestic air transport sector.

## **2.3. Inter-organizational collaboration**

The development of the tourism industry cannot be separated from the actions of the national, provincial and local governments. The influence of the governments is expressed in terms of the policies which they may formulate to guide investors and consumers in the industry . Governments can provide the necessary infrastructure support to investors in the tourism industry. They can provide financial assistance, the institutions to train the manpower needed to operate the tourism businesses and the marketing facilities [10] [11]



Amarsanaa made a master's thesis on the situation of Mongolian tour operators' business activities. The main objective of this research is to analyze Mongolian tour operators business activities, determine their size, competitiveness and subsequent impacts on the destination and to find out the best possible way to run tour operating business in Mongolia according to the destination's specific character and its tourism product features along with trend of International tour operators development.[12] The result is that small tour operators able to share their knowledge, experience, support each other and work together instead competing with each other. There is now lack of coordination and understanding among those small tour operators. They do not belong to any tourist association at the moment. Currently Mongolian Tourism Association (MTA), the most active and powerful association have a very few small tour operators as its member. But unfortunately MTA obviously work for the favor of those big and medium sized tour operators. So the small tour operator's voice could not sound loud. The advantages are they market and promote Mongolia in good way and able to bring more tourists through their company, introduce latest high quality tourism equipment to the country, and bring more new idea and staff learn how to work in western style. Disadvantages are they just want to earn more money in short time as possible, they not really care about so-called sustainable tourism development in Mongolia. They are making money for selling Mongolian nature, culture, wildlife so on and most of the money supposed to spend in the country leaking back to generating countries. In order to avoid being loser and to minimize the leakage the government should consider it to make it at least 50 / 50 investment from both side. He believes that it is not good to have 100% foreign investment in tour operating business in developing countries like Mongolia.

Marn and Shan made a research on perceived critical success factors for the tourism industry of Penang Island: A supply perspective. The aim of this study is to examine and identify the major critical success factors that are crucial in the successful development of the tourism industry of Penang Island. The research's initiative was driven primarily by the average tourism performance of the destination in recent years based on through observation in tourist arrival, receipts, and length of stay in comparison with the joint heritage status city of Malacca. The findings suggest that the authority and relevant stakeholders in the industry should provide greater emphasis and effort in developing competence and strengths in these identified factors in order to improve overall destination competitiveness locally as well as globally.[13]

Based on the researches above, they wrote about the key success factors of tourism sector focused on specific areas. According to the previous researchers, they suggest that the authority and relevant stakeholders, government should provide greater emphasis and effort in developing security, competence and strengths in this industry. The role of media and technology was proved to be significant in development of the sector.

### **3. Research design**

#### **3.1. Research method**

In order to fulfill the research purpose which is to explore effectiveness of Mongolia's tourism management system, especially in terms of response mechanism toward Gorkhi-Terelj national park, the author applies qualitative research method. In-depth interviews were the major research method employed. Formal and informal meetings were held. The survey methodology, which was used to determine effectiveness of tourism a management system was through research literature, interviews with experts of the industry and documentation analyzes.

1. The initial step consisted of searching for existing studies or literatures focusing on tour operating business both international and Mongolian field. Most of existing research found overall tourism industry and its impacts. Thus literature focusing on tour operators is limited.
2. Contacted online with Mongolian tour operators, government organizations, and universities websites and made analyze their field of activities, product feature so on.
3. Finally all the data were collected from literature study, data search and interviewees' responses were compiled and analyzed for concluding remarks.

#### **3.2. Interviewees**

Total of four people involved in the research activity. Respondents were carefully based selected based on the representativeness of policy stakeholders and private companies for the scheduled online interviews in order to fulfill the research purpose. Table 1 contains basic information on the interviewees. To avoid exposing persons and positions, names and titles are withheld. The purposes of using expert's opinion are to find out real, contemporary information concerning the particular case. The expert approach is represented by a company employee (top level manager) and employees who work in Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Mongolian Tourism association (who have at least 5 years of experience). It can provide a wide range of information about single case, which brings forward deep and focused insight.

Interviewee A, Director and Founder of "Mongolia Expeditions" Co.LTD. Mongolia Expeditions Company consists of experienced individuals from all walks of life. But what they have in common is their passion for travel to out-of-the-way places which is reflected in our expert knowledge, excellent organization, and small group size. Based in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, they offer a varied portfolio of trekking, mountaineering, mountain biking, and horse riding tours for groups, families, and couples, as well as variety of scheduled group departures. They organize expeditionary voyages for non-conventional activities such as caving, paragliding, bird watching, and logistics support for film and media companies – our particular pride. Mongolia Expeditions Company won "The Best Tour Operator" award given by Mongolian Tourism Association in 2011, 2012, 2013.

Interviewee B, employees of Ministry of Environment and Tourism, who have at least 5 years of experience working in this industry. The mission of the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism is to keep ecosystem balance unobtrusive, to maintain the natural resource wealth, to restore natural regeneration, and to maintain environmental sustainability by developing environmentally sustainable tourism, to ensure the harmonization of the state, citizens and business entities.

Interviewee C, an employee of Mongolian Tourism Association, which is the first and largest association in Mongolian tourism industry. The organization is founded in 1992, is to serve its members, to further develop an interest in Mongolian inbound & outbound tourism and to play in the main role in the connection between private sector and government organizations. Its nearly 120 members consist of organizations relating to tourism industries, including travel agencies, tour operators, hotels and tourist camps, furthermore transport, tourism training institutions.

Table 1. Basic information of the interviewees, *Source: Yang, (2010)*

Coded name	Profession	Interview date
A	Director of “Mongolia Expeditions” Co.LTD	2021.11.30
B	Employee of Ministry of Environment and Tourism	2021.12.01
B1	Employee of Ministry of Environment and Tourism	2021.12.01
C	Employee of Mongolian Tourism Association	2021.11.30

### 3.3. Interview questions

Interview questions were structured in an open-ended way to capture the full perspective of respondents and to give them opportunity to contribute new ideas. Each interview starts with the author briefly introducing himself and the research purpose. The author also briefly explained the independent and dependent variables of the study. Questions are as following:

1. When was the last time you visited Gorkhi-Terelj National Park and how did you feel as a visitor?
2. What do you think about the current situation of information gathering for tourists who want to visit Gorkhi-Terelj National Park? What do you think should be done to improve the situation?
3. What do you think about the current situation of resource mobilization of the tourism industry of Mongolia? What do you think should be done to improve the situation in case of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park?
4. What do you think about the current situation of inter-organizational collaboration? What do you think should be done to improve the situation in case of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park?

#### 4. Research findings and discussion

The research findings were derived from the interviews and the field study. In many developing countries, tourism has become one of the principle sources of foreign exchange earnings and it is playing a vital role in raising the standard of living and lifting people above the poverty line.

Interviewee A1 has been very welcoming to interview with the author. He began his interview briefly introducing himself, his company and there was not any active event for the last two years due to Covid-19 pandemic. He further talked about that *“As it is one of the most attractive spots for tourist in Mongolia, I visit Gorkhi-Terelj National Park at least once a month. Sometimes with my family and sometimes with domestic and international tourists. I have to say that management system of the national park is getting better these days. Tourists can experience more adventurous events than a few years ago. Tourists seem very joyful when they visit there. For international tourists, gathering sufficient information about the national park is one of the biggest obstacles. Many tourists say that they could not find sufficient information before they visit. I think it could be improved by preparing many professionals in the tourism industry who speak English fluently. In terms of resource mobilization, wide open spaces with a very limited population density; the country is rich on natural heritage and special biological diversity reaching from the flora and fauna of Siberia into the deserts and arid steppes of Central Asia. We have so many things to attract more international tourists. For Mongolia, which is a landlocked developing country, tourism represents an opportunity to spread development also to the poor and remote regions that may not have benefited from other types of economic development if we could improve the situation. Plus, I would say inter-organizational collaboration is very poor in the tourism industry of Mongolia. Besides, political and economic issues of the country could be counted as weaknesses. The governors who work in the ministry are not professionals. There is a great need to make the governmental and private companies cooperation to improve the management system of the tourism industry of Mongolia.”*

Interviewee B1 says that he has been very busy these days and he answered after a few calls. He briefly introduced himself and explained what he is responsible for in the beginning of his talk. He talked in more formal way. He stated that *“As almost everyone knows, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park is the closest from Ulaanbaatar city and one of the most attractive places for tourists. Therefore, I visit there often. Sometimes it is for meeting the management stakeholders of the National Park. According to the results of surveys we have, most tourist are happy that they visited the national park and it was comfortable to stay overnight. Regarding to information gathering for international tourists, it could be said as one of the biggest issue in the tourism sector as there are not sufficient information in English. The ministry is working on to improve the situation. Also, private companies in the sector should work hard to supply information for international tourists. Also, what we have as an opportunity is that we can develop the technological factors which includes communication, infrastructure, transport and equipment. Regarding to resource mobilization, there is a great need to improve the private companies' own product service quality indeed, firstly the management knowledge and skills related with tour operating*

*business and lack of power to think and being creative towards tourism products and services. I think it is more related with human resource system. What I think about the current situation of inter-organizational collaboration in the tourism industry is that it is getting better. We cannot make a big difference in a short time. It needs time to make it better.”*

Interviewee B2 started his interview stating that he is really thankful to us for doing the research. He introduced himself and explained his duty. He emphasized that *“I think everyone enjoys going to Gorkhi-Terelj National park as the city is getting more air polluted and more populated these days. I try to go there often but sometimes I cannot find time to go. The Ministry takes some surveys and the results show that most of the tourists are satisfied. Besides, there are many issues to improve to increase the number of tourists. Many survey results show that information about the attractive places in Mongolia is not sufficient, especially for international tourists. From my view, it is useful to set up tourism information system to provide an information resource for tourists in the cities, present a province, region, and the country. Also, private tourism companies need to develop their information in English on their websites. The current situation of resource mobilization needs to be improved as well. It is one the weaknesses of Mongolian tourism industry. We have so many possibilities to increase the number of tourists since many tourists are attracted by the background meaning of Mongolian nomad life, their daily activities and authentic narrative and story of herders. Situation of inter-organizational collaboration should be improved also. To be honest, there are many directors working in the ministry who are not professionals. The Ministry should improve the collaboration with another ministries and the private companies to improve the whole management system of Mongolia’s tourism industry.”*

Interviewee C1 was an employee of non-governmental organization and he indicated that *“As number of the tourism activities and events in winter time is increasing nowadays, domestic and international tourists seem very happy to go to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. I went there last summer with my family and I have seen so many improvements. But because of Covid-19 pandemic, the number of international tourists have been very low in the last two years. On the other hand, the number of domestic tourists have been increased as the private companies organized many activities for domestic tourists. It has been one of the benefits that our new generation had a possibility to experience the nomadic way of life. Everyone knows that the information for international tourists about Mongolia is not sufficient. Information and communication technologies can contribute significantly to tourism expansion. Lack of marketing and promotion which means insufficient tourism market segmentation and tourism product diversification, positioning of Mongolia as a tourism destination in not clear. About the resource mobilization, I should state that even though there are many possibilities to increase the number of tourists, there are also many things need to be improved. Improving the quality, capacity and skills of human resources; training of government tourism officials, skill of lecturers (trainers) in tourism education, employees in tourism industry and advisory services would definitely help increasing the number of tourists. Poor quality of infrastructure particularly the road condition in the countryside, and general knowledge and efficiency of tour guides are the main 3 difficulties to improve their products and service qualities. Current situation of inter-organizational*

*collaboration in this sector is one of the biggest obstacles to improve the management system of the sector. There is a very big need to improve awareness among the political decision makers of the importance and potentials of tourism.”*

Based on the interviews, it could be summarized that international recognition of Mongolia as an attractive tourism destination remains low and accurate data on tourist numbers, expenditures, expectations and impressions that could be crucial to improving the industry is lacking. Additionally, the country suffers from significant seasonality resulting in an influx of visitors during the summer months that place strain on the country's infrastructure and a dearth of visitors during the cold winter months. This in turn increases the cost of tourism products and reduces the attractiveness of careers in tourism. As a result, the industry is suffering from a significant lack of well-trained human resources. A unified effort by the industry's stakeholders could significantly improve the country's international recognition, the quality industry data, the degree of seasonality, and the shortfall in human resources. Sadly, there is a lack of communication and cooperation between the various public, semi-public, and private organizations that have been created to develop and promote the industry. The public sector, represented by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment has focused most of its attention on supporting Mongolian participation in international trade conventions while advocating for the development of large, capital intensive tourism complexes. Although the ministry has attempted to better engage the private sector, it has not been overly successful. The publicly owned Mongolian National Tourism Center and a variety of private organizations, meanwhile, raise a mixture of public and private funds to pursue individual and often redundant projects. This inefficient duplicity of effort seems to be driven by a lack of communication and trust amongst stakeholders. The result has been that the industry lumbers forward without an efficient and unified plan or objective. At the same time, international development agencies beginning to distance themselves from the tourism industry as they focus more and more on the mining sector.

## **5. Conclusion**

In Mongolia, tourism should be supported and promoted as a means to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social effects, preserving and protecting the environment and heritage. According to World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Mongolia's economic development is subject to the powerful twin influences of distance and isolation and tourism can overcome some of the development constraints caused by these two factors. Tourism also has the advantage that isolation in itself can form an attraction and has the power to support economic and social development outside of the present economic centers of the country (wide spaces of Mongolia's countryside with the mix of nature and culture). Today, tourists seek remote, unspoiled places and in this context tourism can bring social and economic development to locations where no other economic activities take place (like Khovsgul area). In order to develop tourism sector of Mongolia with a better management, it is important to know the key factors affecting on development of tourism of Mongolia.



In Mongolia, tourism should be supported and promoted as a means to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social effects, preserving and protecting the environment and heritage. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices among them. This research enables the tourism stakeholders to prioritize the determining the key factors affecting on development of tourism industry in Mongolia criteria and sub-criteria which functionality will be preferable on the market and therefore be able to yield the highest revenue and customer loyalty. As a starting point, each items must be analyzed about their position from the different four group of respondents' opinions. AHP computation model should be conducted in order to know the items with the highest weights and yield the highest acceptance.

This research is contributing to tourism industry of Mongolia in order to find out the priority of tourism management system in Mongolia with the case study of the Gorkh-Terelj National Park. According to the results, there is pressing need for contemporary tourism policies and legislation. There are differences in the way that public officials and private sector professionals see tourism development. A tourism strategy document (master plan or national strategy) prepared with the involvement of public and private sector representatives would facilitate the development of a unified vision for sustainably developing the sector. The strategy should outline a path for tourism development that is based on realistic assessment of demand and existing and potential tourism products.

In terms of information, information and communication technologies can contribute significantly to tourism expansion, that is why an advanced technologies infrastructure and services are needed and capabilities to utilize technological factors need to be strengthened. Furthermore, facilitation of travel and development of transport and other tourism –related infrastructure is urgently needed and identification of transport infrastructure (including physical infrastructure - better roads and more flights) and services improvements for joint benefit of tourists, travelers and local communities.

In terms of resource mobilization, Mongolia needs larger amounts of foreign funds and direct investments to develop tourism sector and implement important tourism projects. Also there is a great need to improve the quality, capacity and skills of human resources; training of government tourism officials, lecturers (trainers) in tourism education, employees in tourism industry and advisory services and also improve the skills of poor people engaged in tourism through training and upgrading the skills related to tourism services. Country should first assess current and future training requirements in tourism sector (undertaking surveys) and establish national tourism training plan (maybe establishing a national tourism training committee, involving representatives of the government, training institutes and the tourism industry). According to the interview, promoting local resources, arts and crafts to increase the income level is important. Special emphasis should be given on conservation of authentic traditional nomads' culture, including genuine Mongolian dishes and foodstuffs in tourism offer. Tourists want to be

part of Mongolian nature, people and culture while staying there, especially in the countryside. No artificial production of cultural customs will be accepted.

In terms of inter-organizational collaboration, there is need for policy support in taxation and value chains. More detailed studies can help determine problematic aspects and reveal appropriate solutions. In the field of taxation, it is important to study the potential for policy approaches that encourage local collection and improve distribution of public funds. Tracking and monitoring tourism indicators should be improved. Both public and private sector stakeholders would benefit from having access to accurate and reliable data. The collection of data is also important for monitoring the effectiveness of strategic interventions.

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## Endnotes

- [1] See <https://www.owlgen.in/discuss-the-role-of-information-in-tourism/>
- [2] See <https://www.viewmongolia.com/gorkhi-terelj-national-park.html>
- [3] See <https://www.amicusmongolia.com/mongolia-tourism-organizations-institutions.html>
- [4] See <https://www.mongolia-expeditions.com/mongolia-expeditions-and-tours/>
- [5] See <https://www.mne.mn/>
- [6] See [https://www.toursmongolia.com/mongolia\\_travel\\_news/top-10-things-to-do-in-gorkhi-terelj-national-park](https://www.toursmongolia.com/mongolia_travel_news/top-10-things-to-do-in-gorkhi-terelj-national-park)
- [7] See <https://world-tourism.org/>